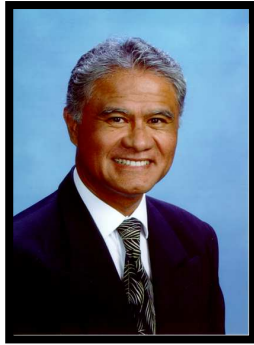




Office of the President
The Senate
State of Hawaii
State Capitol
Honolulu, Hawaii



Senator Robert Bunda

Phone: 586-6090 / Fax: 586-6091
senbunda@capitol.hawaii.gov

Legislative Report Wahiawa Neighborhood Board January 23, 2006

“Let’s Get To It”- Priorities for the 2006 Legislative Session

The 2006 Legislative session is now in full swing and for the first time in over a decade, we face both the luxury of a strong economy and the welcomed dilemma of prioritizing needs that have been put on hold while the State went through a decade-long recession. Consequently, there are lot of unmet needs to attend too and a number of good causes to support.

In my opening day remarks, I spoke on a number of issues that I believe we have consensus on. From improving our education system to nurturing the biotechnology and cancer research industry to providing substantial tax reform, I believe that the time is now to secure Hawaii’s future. Below is a brief outline of my priorities for the 2006 Legislative session.

- First, we must take care of our schools. We must address the backlog of repair and maintenance to insure that school facilities are safe, welcoming to our students and supportive of our teachers. We must also give our teachers the tools to do their job, and then hold them accountable. We will be introducing legislation to:
 - (1) Provide the DOE with \$150 million in general funds and general obligation bonds to help take care of the large repair and maintenance backlog for public schools.
 - (2) Provide an additional \$80 million to the DOE for much needed operational costs.
 - (3) Work to reduce class sizes across the board, K-12, and provide our teachers with the tools they need to succeed.
- Beyond the gas price cap, we need to address our energy needs and ultimately look at the larger notion of integrating a level of sustainability in our lives and lifestyles. We need a comprehensive and long-range approach to dealing with our energy requirements. Moreover, we need to look at how we can create sustainable communities, a sustainable economy, a sustainable quality of life, and the protection of a sustainable environment. We will be introducing legislation to:
 - (1) Make permanent and increase current renewable energy tax credits for private and commercial property owners that install solar photovoltaic panels.

- (2) Provide \$100 million for the construction of future energy efficient public facilities.
 - (3) Provide \$5 million for the installation of photovoltaic systems in four schools as a pilot program to demonstrate the potential energy savings for other public school facilities should they convert to solar energy consumption.
- Housing remains one of our greatest challenges and we will be looking at a number of ways to create more affordable housing for Hawaii's families, workforce and homeless populations. Specifically, we will be introducing legislation to:
 - (1) Increase funding for the Rental Housing Trust Fund.
 - (2) Increase funding for homeless and transitional housing.
 - (3) Create developer incentives to build moderate-income homes.
 - (4) Identify state lands for self-help community land trusts.
 - (5) Provide funding to repair vacant and damaged public housing units.
- In order to develop a true sustainable future for Hawaii, we must strengthen our support for diversified agriculture. We will be introducing legislation to:
 - (1) Repair and maintain state and private irrigation systems; and
 - (2) Treat diversified agriculture as a viable business and industry by enhancing the role of the Agribusiness Development Corporation (ADC).
- Hawaii has the opportunity to lead the nation in biotechnology and life sciences. We need to support and nurture the development of this industry by providing adequate resources for research and development of stem cells, cancer treatments and more.
- Given the surplus in tax revenues, we have an opportunity right here and now to provide long-term tax relief to our families without jeopardizing the financial health of the State. I will continue to advocate for responsible ways to reduce the tax burden on our citizens by pushing for substantial tax reform such as increasing the standard deduction.

CIP request for Leilehua High School Baseball Park and Football facilities

With the 2006 Legislative session in full swing, I have also been busy listening to concerns and inquiries from local residents. A top concern that continues to be mentioned, is the lack of adequate local sports facilities for our youth. To help address the need for more local sports facilities, Representative Marcus Oshiro and I are asking that \$1.5 million be appropriated for the construction of a baseball park and facilities at Leilehua High School. Furthermore, we will also be asking for an appropriation to improve the football facilities at Leilehua High School. The construction of the Baseball Park and renovations to the football facilities at Leilehua High School will benefit our students and the entire local community by providing a permanent home for these beloved sporting venues.